

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-49 are currently pending in the above-identified application. Claims 38-48 have been withdrawn by the Examiner as drawn to a non-elected invention. Claims 1-8 and 10-18 have been allowed. By this amendment, claims 9, 19-28, 31-33, and 35-49 are canceled without prejudice to Applicants' right to prosecute the subject matter of these claims in a related, co-pending application. Claims 29, 30, and 34 are amended as set forth in detail below. No new matter is added by these amendments.

Applicants hereby acknowledge a provisional election with traverse to prosecute the claims of Group 1, claims 1-12 and 14-37, directed to making an endovascular graft. Applicants also acknowledge with traverse the species election wherein the expandable member is an expandable connector ring. According to the MPEP, where claims can be examined together without undue burden, the Examiner must examine the claims on the merits even though they are directed to independent and distinct inventions. *See* MPEP § 803.01. Applicants respectfully submit that all inventions in the present application can readily be searched without undue burden.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants submit herewith a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement in compliance with 37 CFR 1.98(a)(2) together with copies of the foreign patent documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on August 29, 2003. The Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement also cites additional references not previously disclosed. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider and initial the submitted references and that the references appear on the "References Cited" portion of any patent that issues from the present application.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 19-23, 31-33, and 35-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Rogers *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,534,024).

While not agreeing with the Examiner's rejection nor reasons therefor, but in order to further expedite prosecution of the instant application, claims 19-23, 31-33, and 35-37 are canceled. Accordingly, the present rejection is obviated.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 24-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Rogers *et al.* in view of Belke, Jr. *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,783,008). Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Sterling (U.S. Patent No. 4,481,323) in view of Rogers *et al.*

While not agreeing with the Examiner's rejection nor reasons therefor, but in order to further expedite prosecution of the instant application, claims 9 and 24-28 are canceled. Accordingly, the present rejections are obviated.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of claims 1-8 and 10-18 as allowed.

Claims 29, 30, and 34 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 29 and 30 are each amended to recite all the limitations of independent claim 19, from which these claims directly depend. Claim 34 is

amended to recite all of the limitations of the base claim 19 and intervening claims 31-33. In view of these amendments, claims 29, 30, and 34 should be allowable.

CONCLUSION

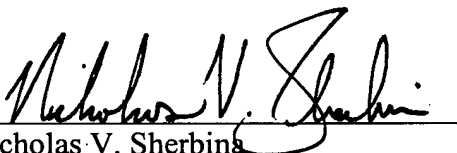
In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 206-467-9600.

Respectfully submitted,

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